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/1025/ Nevertheless, properly understood, public opinion could be regarded as the guardian and executor of the individual obligations which universal justice has created. The judgment of the public is reliable and decisive, not that of the individual person who speaks for his own advantage. Public opinion evaluates every concrete detail of traditional custom which is regarded as a reliable and immutable standard. No one concerns himself about purely theoretical considerations. Hence the judgment of public opinion is instantly effective. Anyone whom it concerns must yield to it absolutely and immediately if he wants to save himself from being universally ostracized. This strikes every guilty person harder than severe blows. Our Yamana are unfamiliar with any kind of formal judiciary. Instead, to put it briefly, just action is approved without reservation and every unjust act is definitely condemned by the public. In both cases the public expresses itself loudly and fearlessly, for it has the advantage in any case over the private individual. The great pressure it puts upon a person can be clearly seen from the fear which everyone, not only the average Indian, has of a bad reputation and even more of public ostracism. If he sees himself ensnared by it, he promptly hastens back to the path of virtue and constantly tries with exaggerated zeal to change the bad opinion about him into a good one. None of this matters, however, to a dishonorable person who has lost all sense of shame. In former times such persons were scarcely to be found; only recently, under the influence of some Europeans have they sunk so low that they must avoid the company of their fellow-tribesmen. An attentive observer does not fail to note this state of affairs since it is so significant. Hyades (q):243 writes: "When they steal among themselves, they seek as much as possible to conceal their thefts; when the culprit is discovered and chastised, public opinion is satisfied. The murderer is ostracized by his compatriots; isolated from everyone, he is fatally condemned to perish of hunger or someday to fall under the blows of a group of extemporaneous judges. Mr. Bridges in his conversations with us has put a great deal of emphasis on the importance of public opinion among the Fuegians" /translated from French/. One could speak of public opinion as the guardian of laws and as the avenger of serious transgressions. It acts no less successfully than a police force or a court of justice.

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In all this the individual is by no means without rights; in